

Get Your Future Started

WITC offers a variety of ways to find the right career path

By Shawnda Schelinder, photo by Artful Eye

“Choosing the right career is like finding a good-fitting pair of shoes,” according to Career Specialist Dan Miller. You might try on many pairs in your life. Some fit at first, but you might outgrow them as your journey progresses. Other shoes are too tight the second you put them on, but you know you have to wear them for a bit until you can find the right ones. The perfect shoe might be a work boot, a comfy sneaker, a stylish pump, a sensible loafer or even flip flops.

Not everyone can enjoy that Cinderella moment where they find the perfect fit, but you don't have to go through the search alone. Miller and his colleagues at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College offer several no- or low-cost services to help you find the right career fit. And these services are available to all members of the community – regardless of their intention to enroll at WITC or another college.

Career Seminars

Each campus hosts free monthly career seminars. The resident career specialists, like Miller, host the seminars within a group setting to help individuals evaluate their career options.



“We start with a What Color is Your Career? personality assessment and the online career assessment,” Miller says. The assessments help identify one's personal qualities and preferences, which Miller ties into career choices.

For some individuals, the experience is an eye-opener, revealing undiscovered career paths. For others, like Rachel Lee, the results are a sound confirmation of the career path she had chosen.

“When I was 16, I started working at the Vaughn Public Library, here in Ashland. I have been for over three years now,” Lee says. Although the 19-year-old enjoys her job, she feels “you get to a point where you've learned all you can and it's time to start a new chapter in your life.”

Lee had read about the career seminars in the local newspaper and felt it would be a good way to check out the programs WITC has to offer, as well as get a feel for the campus. Through the Career Clusters Interest Inventory, Lee learned the top two clusters that might appeal to her were education and business – no surprises there.

“They [the results] seemed to fit with my personality and I have always known that I have liked being in the office setting. It helped cement that this is what I want to do,” Lee says.

And for those who don't know what they want to do? “If you don't know what your strengths are – and some people don't – you take that test and it tells you your strengths and what you might be good at,” Lee says.

For Lee, not only was the program a good fit, but the college was as well. “I love it. I think that it's really great,” she says. “The course instructors really know what they are talking about and you feel like you can trust them. Like even beyond school things, that they really care about you.”

The seminar closes with a review of career outlooks nationally and statewide, which Lee says was very interesting.

Career Counseling

For those who would like more in-depth and one-on-one advice, WITC offers career counseling with its Student Services counselors. There is a fee of \$23 to cover the cost of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and Strong Interest Inventory assessments.

“The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Strong Interest Inventory are great tools for individuals who want to find a career that fits with their personality and interests,” according to Dean of Students Benita Allen. “They help the student determine where their strengths lie and provide some guidance on different career options. In some cases, people just really want reassurance that they're on the right path. In other instances, they have no idea where to begin. Talking about these assessments with our counselors is very helpful.”

Counselor Scott Leonard agrees, saying that the assessments provide a broad overview of an individual's personality type and preferences. “These assessments help people learn about careers that they might find rewarding,” Leonard says. “But they don't measure an individual's skills or abilities.”

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator establishes a profile of an individual's personality within four different categories – how individuals focus their attention, how they take in information, the way they make decisions and how they deal with the world around them. WITC's counselors interpret these results with the individual and suggest careers based on the personality type.

The Strong Interest Inventory measures broad interests within general occupational themes (GOT). Basic interest scales also point to work that the individual may find rewarding, and it also provides the top 10 occupations that are most closely aligned with the individual's interests.

While most individuals are aware of their interests, Leonard enjoys helping students figure out how to translate that into a rewarding career. “I enjoy helping people explore in more detail who they are, what their interests are and how this can help them succeed,” Leonard says. “And it's also rewarding helping folks see that their occupational opportunities are much broader than they thought they could be.”

Career Cluster Assessment

For those who want to identify some areas of interest, but don't need the wealth of information from a career seminar or in-depth career counseling, there is the career cluster questionnaire that people can access for free at witic.edu/careerplanning.

Participants answer 16 questions regarding academic subjects enjoyed or at which they excelled, personal qualities and preferred activities. The assessment uses these responses to rank the career clusters according to what the respondent might find most fulfilling. Participants can then browse through WITC's corresponding programs.

The career cluster assessment is free. Respondents may have the results emailed to them, but registration with an email address is not necessary to complete the assessment.

Regardless of one's preference to learn about career choices in a group setting, one-on-one or completely solo, WITC can help people discover which shoe fits best.

